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## ABSTRACT

As a part of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, this document reported on Indian students' and parents' perceptions of the educational system in their communities, as well as on the observations of 150 Indian and non-Indian community leaders. Results of the various scales indicated that few of the 27 schools studied were heavily criticized by the students and parents; 9 of the 27 schools drew favorable responses from the students in terms of the school responding to student needs. It was noted that the more acculturated students had a better basis for evaluating their schools, while most Indian parents had a poor basis for critically evaluating their schools compared with college-educated middle- and upper-class Americans. The majority of the 700 adults interviewed, like most Americans, accepted the schools that served them as being adequate or good. The strongest criticisms of schools for Indians were voiced by community leaders and other influential people. It was felt that the short time-span given to the study and concealment of negative feelings by the Indians (when talking to strangers) might have contributed to the lack of criticism in many of the Indian communities. (EL)

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THE NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

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FINAL REPORT

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Perceptions of Indian Education

Series IV

How Indian Students and Parents Evaluate

No. 11

Their Schools

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## NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

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The Final Report consists of five Series of Papers:

- I. Community Backgrounds of Education in the Communities Which Have Been Studied.
- II. The Education of Indians in Urban Centers.
- III. Assorted Papers on Indian Education--mainly technical papers of a research nature.
- IV. The Education of American Indians--Substantive Papers.
- V. A Survey of the Education of American Indians.

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## HOW INDIAN STUDENTS AND PARENTS EVALUATE THEIR SCHOOLS

This report is based on the analysis of student, parent, and community leader interviews and two items on the semantic differential used with students.\* Two student, four parent, and two community leader rating scales have been used. All of these scales were originally 6 point scales. All student and parent scales, however, were collapsed to 4 points as follows:

| <u>Points</u> | <u>Meaning</u>    | <u>Value</u> |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 and 2       | Negative          | 2            |
| 3             | Slightly Negative | 3            |
| 4             | Slightly Positive | 4            |
| 5 and 6       | Positive          | 5            |

We have used results on the semantic differential which were obtained for students in most of the schools studied by the Colorado, San Francisco, Arizona and Minnesota field teams. We do not have semantic differential results for students in the Chicago, Greeley, Hoopa, Keshena, Neopit, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Red Wing schools. On the semantic differential, the 6 points have the following values:

1. Very Positive
2. Positive
3. Slightly Positive
4. Slightly Negative
5. Negative
6. Very Negative

We have found that very few students ever checked points 4, 5, or 6 on the semantic differential, and we thus distinguish mainly between more or less

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\*This report is one of a series on the results of the rating scale analysis done using Student, Parent, Community Leader, and Teacher Interviews recorded by personnel on the National Study of American Indian Education. The reader will understand what is discussed in this paper better if he is familiar with the other papers in Series IV of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, particularly numbers 1, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12. Paper No. 1 lists the schools studied and some of their characteristics and the nature of the field research. Paper No. 7 includes examples of the interview schedules and rating scales utilized in the Study and describes how they were formulated and used. Papers No. 8 and No. 9 deal with the validity and reliability of the rating scales and interviews. Numbers 10, 11, and 12 are based on the results of the rating scale and questionnaire analyses. Number 10 deals with the attitudes of Indians toward their culture. Number 12 discusses the attitudes of Indians toward formal education, of teachers toward Indians, and the communication and interaction between Indians and teachers.

positive ratings. We assumed that a rating of "3 -- Slightly Positive" on the semantic differential is significantly more negative than a rating of "1 -- Very Positive."

### Students

Scale K: Respondent's Opinion of the School He Is Now Attending.

The majority of students fall at the positive end of this scale. Twenty-nine percent were rated at point 4 and 49 percent at points 5 or 6 (almost all of these actually were rated at point 5). Eleven percent were rated at points 1 and 2, and 11 percent at point 3. The mean rating for the total sample of 1,382 students is 4.02; the mode is point 5. A rating of 4 indicates that the student felt that his school was "OK" or about average in relation to other schools. A rating of 5 indicates that the student said that he felt his school was "pretty good" or "better" than other schools. Students rated at points 1 and 2 clearly felt that their school was very poor. Students rated at point 3 seemed slightly more critical than approving of their school.

The most important question on the Student Interview Schedule for this rating was: "How does your school compare with other schools you know? Is it better or worse?" Another question about what the student liked best and disliked most also elicited some pertinent information. Some examples of actual responses should help the reader to understand the opinions and attitudes of these students. (The symbols at the left identify the respondents).

Question: How does your school compare with other schools you know? Is it better or worse?

C-9-S-251: This school is better than the school in New Mexico. You get a better education; they teach you more here. It's harder here, too.

H-2-S-1: Well, at \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes kids would hardly talk to me or anything, but here they usually talk to me.

S-7-S-43: Worse. The teachers aren't very good. Some are "Hippies" or something. Seems like they're out of the bottom of the bag.

S-1-S-14: Better--because of recess.

S-3-S-49: It doesn't have as much equipment as schools in the cities.

O-2-S-24: Well, it's all right but I don't like it. Some of the Indian girls are mad at me. You've got to be around certain people to be accepted. Some of these girls think they are it. One minute you've got a friend and then you turn around and they talk about you. So this school is worse.

O-2-S-30: I think it rates pretty high overall. About on an even level.

M-1-S-53: It's more modern and has better teachers.

- A-2-S-41: I guess it's better because the work is easy.
- A-5-S-60: I would say it's better because we get to mix with those other kids. I think we learn a lot.
- N-2-S-301: My school is better. The principal, students and curriculum make it better.
- N-1-S-101: Worse. Sometimes when you go into the lunchroom they holler at you.

Different students clearly give different types of responses. Some say merely, "It's better" or "It's OK." Most praise or criticize one or two specific things, some of which may seem trivial to us. The opinion of the school voiced by some students is a function of how they feel about their peers at the school. Others base their opinion on the learning that goes on there: some think that their school is better because the work is challenging or "hard," while others prefer their school because it is relatively "easy." Thus, we cannot make any generalizations about what students like or dislike in their schools. We can say that most Indian students have some specific gripes or criticisms about their schools--about a course, certain teachers, rules, poor discipline, overly strict discipline, the way other kids act, etc.--but most feel that their schools are about as good or a little better than other schools they know of.

On the other hand, 22 percent of our sample felt that their schools were not as good as others. Some of these students articulate rather serious criticisms and seem to be quite concerned about them. An example of such a student is the following:

H-2-S-2

I: How does this school compare with other schools?

R: Well, when I talked to my girlfriend out in California, she had all kinds of electives that they don't have here that I'd love to take. . . . And the schools out there--they have more black students and Mexicans and Spanish and all kinds of nationalities, and so they offer--they try to offer everything for each group. I think the school here is too segregated. I think they'd die if a Negro came here to go to school.

I: What don't you like about this school?

R: Well, let's see--like their guidance and stuff. I don't like their principles, I don't like their electives; I don't like their detention; I don't like the dress code; I don't like the way that--well--they have this late bus that was originally so that Indian students could stay after school for things, and now it's mostly a white bus for white kids that need a ride home after sports. . . .

This student appears to be more sophisticated than the average Indian student, though he may be simply more verbal about his feelings. It is quite possible that some students with equally severe and extensive criticisms merely mentioned one or two things they liked or disliked in order to end the interview sooner.

Based on the data we have, however, we must conclude that most Indian students accept their schools more or less as they are. Few are advocating major changes or reforms in their education.

Scale 0: Respondent's Opinion of His Teacher(s).

Students were no more critical of their teachers than they were of their schools in their interviews with us. The mean rating for the total sample of 1,448 students was 4.19; the mode was point 4. Forty-one percent of the sample were rated at this point and 45 percent were rated at points 5 and 6. Only 5 percent were really critical of their teachers (and rated at points 1 or 2); another 10 percent voiced somewhat more criticism than praise of their teachers and were rated at point 3.

The key question on the interview schedule was: "How well does your teacher do his (her) job?" Students who replied that their teachers were "OK" or "about average," or students who said that some of their teachers were bad and some good, were rated at point 4. Students who clearly felt that their teachers were doing well were rated at points 5 or 6. Some examples of student responses to this question are:

Q: How well does your teacher do his (her) job?

C-9-S-251: Very well.

C-2-S-351: Our teacher leaves the room too often. But the rest are all right.

1-1-2-S-1: They do a fairly good job, I believe.

O-2-S-24: Most of them are pretty good.

H-2-S-2: Not very well.

Few students elaborated upon their opinion of their teacher(s). Therefore, we cannot say what students like or dislike about their teachers. We would guess that this varies from individual to individual, but that, on the whole, their reasons for liking or disliking a teacher are no different from the reasons of other American students. The only uniquely Indian objection to teachers were relatively infrequent cases in which students felt that a teacher was prejudiced against Indians.

We conclude that, on the whole, Indian students feel that their teachers do an average or better job of teaching. Relatively few voiced serious complaints about their teachers to us.

### Comparison of Student Results by Schools

We examined the mean scores on rating scales "K" and "O" and on semantic differential items "This School" and "Teachers" for students in each school. It was clear that a few schools were more heavily criticized than the other schools in our sample; similarly, a few schools were praised significantly more than the others. Students at a junior high school in Minneapolis (referred to as "School C" in previous papers by other members of the National Study of American Indian Education, and henceforth referred to as "School C" in this paper) were more critical of their school than students in any other school in our sample. Students in the Shawano Junior and Senior High Schools were also quite negative in their opinions of their schools and teachers. Students at Moclips Junior and Senior High Schools and at Hoopa Junior and Senior High Schools were quite critical, too. The reasons in each case appear to be different.

Quinault students at Moclips, for instance, attended an elementary school in their home town of Taholah. Most Quinaults preferred this school, for it was all-Indian and it was seen as their own. Many felt that teachers in Moclips were prejudiced against Indians. It was certainly true that there was much less contact between Moclips teachers and the Quinaults. Students compared the two schools and many came to feel that they did not care for the Moclips school and its teachers.

At Hoopa the reasons for student disapproval of the school were different. For one thing, teacher turnover was high, and some students seemed to feel that their teachers were not good. For another thing, discipline in the high school was somewhat lax compared with other schools, and many students evidently felt that the clowning around in the halls, the skipping of classes and the illicit smoking and "making out" engaged in or near school grounds during the day were not the hallmarks of a "good" school. Many students, like many teachers, appeared to place the blame for this on the students themselves. A number of Hoopa students, when asked what they disliked about their school, gave replies which could be categorized under the heading, "the student attitude." This is instructive, for it suggests that students do not automatically place the blame for what they perceive as a poor school on the administration, the teachers, or the board of education. Instead, they may see their peers as the cause of this.

Students in several schools stood out as being relatively more positive in their opinions toward their schools than the average. These schools were: Chemawa, Bethel, Indian Oasis, Fort Thomas, and Tuba City. We do not know enough about the local factors in each of these schools and communities to explain why students in these schools approve more highly of their schools and teachers. However, if we compare the students who approve most highly of their schools with those who are most critical, it does appear that less acculturated students in all-Indian schools are less apt to be critical of their schools than more acculturated students in schools with some non-Indian students.

Of twenty-seven schools for which we had adequate data on student attitudes toward the school and teachers, we have listed the nine schools in which students were most critical and the nine in which students were most favorable. The relative degree of acculturation of the local Indian population and the percentage of Indian students in the school are indicated.

TABLE 1

Schools Which Were Most Criticized and Most Praised by Their  
Respective Students

| <u>Nine Most Criticized<br/>Schools</u> | <u>High Degree of<br/>Acculturation</u> | <u>Low Degree of<br/>Acculturation</u> | <u>Percentage of<br/>Indian Students</u> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Chicago                                 | X                                       |                                        | 3                                        |
| Hoopa                                   | X                                       |                                        | 35                                       |
| Moclips                                 |                                         | X                                      | 20                                       |
| Pawnee                                  | X                                       |                                        | 20                                       |
| School C                                | X                                       |                                        | 20                                       |
| Ponca City                              | X                                       |                                        | 5                                        |
| St. Francis                             |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| St. Joseph                              | X                                       |                                        | 100                                      |
| Shawano                                 | X                                       |                                        | 20                                       |
| <u>Nine Most Favored<br/>Schools</u>    |                                         |                                        |                                          |
| Angoon                                  |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| Bethel                                  |                                         | X                                      | 90                                       |
| Chemawa                                 |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| Flagstaff*                              |                                         | X                                      | 10                                       |
| Fort Thomas                             |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| Indian Oasis                            |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| Pima Central                            |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| Shonto                                  |                                         | X                                      | 100                                      |
| Tuba City                               |                                         | X                                      | 95                                       |

\*The Indian students in question live in a BIA dormitory and attend the public schools in Flagstaff. The percentage of Indian students in the dormitory, of course, is 100 percent, but the percentage of Indian students in the schools these Indians attend is roughly 10 percent.

In junior and senior high schools. The elementary school population was

Several hypotheses seem reasonable in light of this. One is that the more acculturated students have a better basis for evaluating their schools, for they know more about other Indian and non-Indian schools. They may, consequently, have higher expectations of their schools. Another is that the more critical students, most of whom are in the minority in their schools, are generally doing worse in school than their non-Indian classmates, and their criticisms may reflect this. Increased contact with non-Indians may give them a more cynical view of the Indian's place in white man's America, and this may be reflected in their attitudes toward their schools. A third possibility is that Indian students, for the most part, prefer all-Indian schools. In such schools Indian students may feel more "comfortable" and less anxious about discrimination, being accepted by peers, being as well-dressed as other students, etc. Moreover, the outstanding students, athletes, etc. have to be Indian in all-Indian schools. Finally, of course, it may be the case that the schools attended by the less acculturated Indians are better in some way. For instance, schools with all-Indian enrollments may have more concern for the education of Indian young people and the special problems they may have, either as Indians or as poor people. Any or all of these four hypotheses seem reasonable to us. Unfortunately, our data do not allow us to judge the relative merits of each. Our field teams should be able to provide more insight on these questions based on their observations and informal interactions with Indian students. Our data definitely do not indicate, however, that any one particular aspect of the school or school program, such as the extent to which local Indian culture and history is incorporated into the curriculum or the degree of Indian control of the school, correlates significantly with student approval or disapproval of the school.

### Parents

#### Scale II-B. Parent's Perception of How Well the School Is Meeting the Needs of His Child.

Over 80 percent of the parents rated on this scale were rated at points 4, 5, or 6--all positive. The mean was 4.02, and the mode was 4. Fifty-three percent were rated at point 4. It should be noted that many parents said very little in response to the questions asked them by the interviewer, and very few long conversations in which parents really opened up about their opinions of the school are recorded in our interviews. Parents who said relatively little but who indicated no serious criticisms were inevitably rated at points 4 or 5. Point 4 is defined as: "The parent feels that the school does a fairly good job in meeting the needs of his child, though there is definitely room for improvement." There were two very open-ended questions involved in making the rating: "What do you like about the school your child attends?" and "What don't you like about the school your child attends?" There were also a number of questions pertaining specifically to teachers, curriculum, administration, control of the school, etc.

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approximately 55 percent Indian. All students rated and described in this report, however, were in the junior or senior high school in which Indian students constituted 35 percent of the population.

Those 375 parents (out of 700) who were rated at point 4 indicated general approval of the school, but made a few criticisms. Most common was the suggestion that the schools should pay more attention to the Indian heritage. Other common criticisms were that the school had a few poor teachers, that certain subjects were ~~not~~ offered, that discipline was lax, that some teachers were prejudiced, or that their children were not learning as much as they should.

The 200 parents rated at point 5 had no serious criticisms of the school and its program. They indicated only their approval of the school and its current program. The 50 parents rated at points 1 and 2 and the 75 at point 3, on the other hand, were quite critical of the school or of some important aspect of it. These parents--constituting 18 percent of our sample--are seriously disappointed in or perturbed about their schools.

#### Scale VI-A: Parent's Opinion of His Child's Teacher(s).

Eighty-seven percent of the parents rated on this scale (N = 646) were rated at points 4, 5, or 6. Two hundred eighty-four were rated at point 4 and 281 at points 5 or 6 (mostly 5). Six percent were rated at points 1 or 2 and 7 percent at point 3. The mean rating was 4.24 and point 4 was the mode. Point 4 is defined as follows:

4. Slightly positive. Parent thinks that his child's teacher is "OK" or about average in comparison with other teachers. Or he thinks that there are some good and some poor teachers, but that more of them are good than are poor.

There was one specific question on which this rating was primarily based; it was "How well is the teacher doing?" Other questions about whether or not the parent knew his child's teacher and had visited him, how well his child liked his teacher, how well his child was doing in school, and what a good teacher was like also elicited pertinent responses.

A few examples of parent responses to these questions are:

A-4-P-7(Q)\*: The teacher does fine. (Q) She usually teaches good.  
(Q) The teacher treats her [respondent's child] good so she likes the teacher.

A-3-P-1(Q): The teachers are nice and, as far as I know, they're doing fine. (Q) A good teacher is nice and pleased to meet you. (Q) Johnny likes his teachers. He tells me his teachers correct him when he does his schoolwork the wrong way.

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\*(Q) indicates that the interviewer asked a question at this point; what follows is a response to this question.

- H-4-P-1(Q): The teacher does fine. (Q) A good teacher is very patient and understanding and is not prejudiced.  
(Q) My three smallest children like their teachers very much, but the two older ones don't.
- H-2-P-2(Q): The teachers do as well as they can be expected to.  
(Q) A good teacher likes children, is strict but can also be easy-going at times. (Q) All my children could be doing better, but it is not all the teacher's fault.
- S-2-P-5(Q): Teachers at \_\_\_\_\_ don't pay as much attention to the Indian child as to the white child. They just want to let these kids slide by until they're 16. And many of the teachers are milk-toast type. Some are on the border of "man-lovers," and the kids know this. I haven't seen any who present a strong male image, with authority. You need that. Last year the discipline was terrible. (Q) One teacher downgrades Indian ways and Indian people. This causes students to rebel and causes negative feelings about home and community. What happens at home is none of his business if he feels that way. If this teacher were respectful, it would be all right. (Q) A good teacher should be just like one of the gang--they shouldn't stay too much to themselves. They should be accessible, openminded, and get along with people.
- S-2-P-4(Q): It seems to me that some teachers aren't really communicating with the students to help them out. They seem to dwell too long on particular points, rather than helping students to move along at their own pace. . .  
(Q) The teachers seem to be doing a pretty good job, and the students have to work with the teachers too.
- S-1-P-3(Q): She's really good. I like her. (Q) A good teacher is stern, but she has a way about her that kids like--they don't think she's being mean. She does special things for them.
- O-3-P-2(Q): I don't think my children could have any better teachers than they have.
- O-3-P-6(Q): All of the teachers I have met seem real nice and friendly. I don't know much about their classes.
- C-10-P-413(Q): In some respect the teachers are doing good; in others, they discriminate. (Q) A good teacher is not partial. He treats all equal.
- M-5-P-1(Q): The teacher does good.

Most parents felt their child's teachers were adequate or good. Some did not elaborate on their opinion. Others evidently appreciated such qualities as: friendliness to them as parents, being part of the community, being strict and maintaining order but also being nice in class, and, of course, teaching the children well. Many parents, especially those in schools with mixed Indian and non-Indian populations, were very sensitive to prejudice and discrimination on the part of teachers.

#### Scale VI-B. Parent's Opinion of the Curriculum in His Child's School.

Eighty-six percent of the parents rated on this scale (N = 666) were rated at points 4, 5, or 6. Three hundred forty-five of these (52 percent of the total sample) were rated at point 4 and 230 (34 percent) at points 5 or 6. Five percent were severely critical of the curriculum and were rated at points 1 or 2, and 9 percent were quite critical and were rated at point 3. The mean for the total sample was 4.14.

Point 4 is defined as follows:

4. Slightly positive. Parent either thinks that the curriculum is "OK" or he makes both positive and negative evaluations of it, with the positive ones predominating.

Point 5 is defined as positive. A parent rated at point 5 must have said clearly that he felt the curriculum was good and he must have made no serious criticisms of it at all.

There were a number of questions on the interview schedule which dealt with the curriculum. Two were quite general: "What does your child learn at school?" and "What should your child learn in school that he is not now learning?" Several other questions dealt specifically with the incorporation of tribal and/or Indian history, culture and language into the curriculum. Some examples of Indian parents' responses to these questions are:

A-3-P-13: (What does child learn in school?) English. (What should he learn?) No response.

A-4-P-7(Q): I'm satisfied with the things she is being taught.  
(Q) She learns reading and arithmetic and history, and that makes me happy. (Q) I wouldn't mind if she is taught about the Apache history and culture; in fact, I think it would be good. (Q) She already knows her own language so I don't think she should be taught it in school. (Q) I think it would be worthwhile to have some subjects taught in Apache.

H-3-P-1(Q): He learns the usual subjects--reading, math, geography, etc. (Q) They should be teaching more training in different trades to prepare for jobs later. (Q) Yes, they should learn about their culture and history, to preserve their heritage and take pride in it. (Q) Classes could be given in Indian dancing, beadwork, weaving and basket-weaving.

H-2-P-2(Q): They learn what the school offers them. (Q) They should learn better penmanship and better study habits that will help them in high school and college. (Q) Yes, they should teach about our tribal history and culture so that the children of today won't lose sight of their Indian heritage and also so they'll learn how much easier life is for the Indian today. (Q) They should be taught all that can be found out about our tribe and set down in a history book as it really happened, not how the white man wants it written. It should be an elective course in high school. (Q) No, the Menominee language is a lost art. There is no one qualified to teach it properly.

N-12-P-1(Q): No, they shouldn't teach about the native history and culture at school; this can be done at home.

N-2-P-5(Q): He learns his regular subjects, good behavior patterns, manners, the value of education. (Is there anything else he should be learning?) Far as I'm concerned, I don't think so.

S-2-P-4(Q): My children are learning to accept life in \_\_\_\_\_ (family just moved to this town). The next important thing they're learning is the academic material. (Is there anything else they should be learning?) They need to learn to plan toward when they will be out of school--toward a broader outlook on life--rather than just for today. They need to realize that there is more to life than just going up to school from year to year--that they have to be prepared for something when they are out of school--college or training for work.

O-3-P-6(Q): As to lessons, this school is better than Chilocco or Haskell. A lot of kids going from here to Chilocco have already had the same classes and have to take them over again. (Q) They are learning everything, I suppose. I don't know much about it. My oldest daughter did want to be a nurse, but she found out when she graduated that she couldn't because she hadn't taken the right courses. (Q) Yes, they should learn about their tribe in school. It would be an advantage to the tribe because so many of the younger people have intermarried with whites, that they are losing all of that. Even I don't know anything about the Pawnee tribe.

C-10-P-413(Q): They learn what the white way of life and the Indian way of life are like, and how they're different. And they learn how to get along with other people. (Q) The school doesn't have some things like music appreciation and that sort of thing. If they had it in the school they would have more kids going out for band.

Many parents did not know much about what their children learned in school, but approved anyway. Many had definite suggestions for improving the curriculum, usually by adding something (e.g. more vocational training, certain more esoteric subjects such as art and music, and above all, courses in Indian or tribal history and culture). All parents seem pleased that the "standard" subjects--reading, writing, arithmetic, history, English, science--were being taught. In short, their attitudes regarding the curriculum were little different from those of other Americans with similar educational backgrounds and in similar social and economic positions, with the one important exception that most of these parents wanted some kind of special attention paid to tribal and Indian history and culture.

Scale VI-C: Parent's Opinion of the Performance of the School Administration.

Eighty-four percent of the parents rated on this scale (N = 616) were rated on the positive side of the scale (points 4, 5 or 6). The modal rating was 4; 260 parents were rated at this point. Ten percent were rated at points 1 or 2 and 6 percent at point 3. The mean score was 4.20. Approximately one out of eight parents (16 percent) had serious gripes about the principal, superintendent, or other administrative official in their children's school(s). But the majority evidently felt that the present school administration was "all right," good, or excellent. Most of those rated at point 4 felt that the administration was "all right" but criticized it on some score or another. The remaining 42 percent had no real complaints about the administration, and offered the opinion that it was good or even excellent.

One question on the interview schedule specifically asked: "Is the principal doing a good job?" Other questions concerning the policy-making and control of the school, while concerned mainly with local boards of education, occasionally brought out opinions on the school administration. Examples of such questions are: "Who actually sets the policy and makes the decisions regarding the school your child attends?" "Is the school following what the majority of the local parents want for their children?" Responses to these questions were generally brief, such as

- A-4-P-07: Yes, he's doing a good job.
- H-2-P-02: She's trying very hard to do her duties as head of the school. She has been helpful to me.
- 1-1-7-P-03: They do OK.
- N-12-P-01: Yes, things seem to be running smooth.
- N-3-P-0: Yes, I never heard no complaints.
- S-2-P-4: I don't know who the principal is. (Q) He seems to do a real good job.
- O-3-P-3: Yes, I've talked to him and he seems to be a real friendly fellow.

Some of these parents appear to know little about the administrators and the administration of the school. Many parents evidently based their opinion on whether "things were running smooth," i.e., whether or not they had heard of any scandals or serious problems. Some parents appeared to be more informed about the administration of the school. A few examples are:

C-10-P-413: They need a counsellor to work more closely with high school students. Then they could prepare better for college courses. (Q) I know the principal mostly by hearsay. He won't let the kids form clubs; he stopped the homecoming parade; and he doesn't get along with the kids.

S-2-P-5(Q): The principal at the high school is new here. What he is doing is best for the kids. Discipline is high compared to last year and B is doing a good job as principal administrator at the elementary school.

H-3-P-1(Q): The school is not doing what most parents want. Parents would appreciate more cooperation and less criticism. (Q) I have no voice in deciding what goes on at school. Rules and decisions are only presented after they're made. (Q) Mr. C at C school is good. Mr. D at D school tends to show partiality to town or white children.

Such parents, if they are community or neighborhood leaders or opinion-makers, may at times shape the opinions of others who merely listen to other people's comments in forming an opinion about something.

#### Comparison of Parent Results by Schools

The parents who criticized the school most strongly were those of children in Junior High School C in Minneapolis. These parents had the lowest mean score of all parent groups on each of the 4 rating scales. Mean scores were 3.0 or lower on each scale. They criticized the teachers, the curriculum, the administration, as well as the school in general. School C students were the most critical students we interviewed as well.

Other schools of which parents were much more critical than average were: Keshena, Moclips, Neah Bay and Ponca City. The reasons for dissatisfaction with the Moclips school were presented in the previous section on students. As for Neah Bay, it appears that the school was estranged from the Makah Indian community. Connelly and Barnhardt report that the principal of the Neah Bay School referred to the school compound as the "small island of the State of Washington in the sea of federal reservations." Teacher turnover was rapid, and teachers were isolated from the community. Most teachers lived in the housing units on the school "campus" inside the chain fence which surrounds the school compound. Three of the five school board members were non-Indians from an off-reservation town, and only one of the remaining two board members from Neah Bay was Indian. The superintendent's office was in the off-reservation town. The field workers state:

There was expressed a feeling of inadequacy about relating to the school, and the expectation that efforts to do so would result in belittlement. Parents and other adults interviewed would make favorable mention of individual teachers, but mention with a sense of hurt that there had been a community dinner given to welcome new teachers but minimal reciprocity of feeling by school staff. . . . The stronger impression is that there resides in the community a submerged fear of the school--a mistrust of its attitudes toward the people of the community. (Connelly and Barnhardt, 1970, p. 7).

The situation here is somewhat similar to the situation of the Quinault vis-a-vis the Moclips school: in both Taholah and Neah Bay, Indians did not feel that the school was "theirs," nor even that they were welcome at it. We are not sufficiently familiar with the situations in the other schools to explain or elaborate upon the relative dissatisfaction of Indian parents in Keshena, Minneapolis, and Ponca City. We suspect, however, that the militant Indian individuals and organizations in Minneapolis and Ponca City and the ever-present contrast between relatively poor Indians and more affluent whites underlie the criticisms voiced by many Indian parents in these areas.

Four schools stand out on our rating scale results as enjoying the most favorable parent opinions. These are: Fort Thomas, Indian Oasis, Magnolia and Shonto. As in the case of the students, we do not have enough specific information on each of these four schools to indicate what it is that parents in these communities approve of so highly.

We can list the nine schools of which parents are the most approving and the nine schools of which parents are most critical (out of a sample of 29 schools), just as we did for students:

Table 2

Schools Which Were Most Criticized and Most Praised by Parents  
of Their Respective Students

| <u>Nine Most Criticized<br/>Schools</u> | <u>High<br/>Acculturation</u> | <u>Low<br/>Acculturation</u> | <u>Percentage<br/>Indian Students</u> |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Chicago                              | X                             |                              | 3                                     |
| 2. Hoopa                                | X                             |                              | 35                                    |
| 3. Keshena                              | X                             |                              | 95                                    |
| 4. Moclips                              |                               | X                            | 20                                    |
| 5. Neah Bay                             | X                             |                              | 66                                    |
| 6. Pawnee                               | X                             |                              | 20                                    |
| 7. School C                             | X                             |                              | 20                                    |
| 8. Ponca City                           | X                             |                              | 5                                     |
| 9. St. Joseph                           | X                             |                              | 100                                   |

Nine Most Favored Schools

|                 |   |   |     |
|-----------------|---|---|-----|
| 1. Browning     |   | X | 85  |
| 2. Cut Bank     | X |   | 8   |
| 3. Fort Thomas  |   | X | 100 |
| 4. Indian Oasis |   | X | 100 |
| 5. Magnolia     | X |   | 100 |
| 6. Pembroke     | X |   | 95  |
| 7. St. Francis  |   | X | 100 |
| 8. Shonto       |   | X | 100 |
| 9. Taholah      |   | X | 100 |

Again, a positive correlation between the degree of acculturation and the degree to which parents criticize the schools exists. A negative correlation between the percentage of Indian students in the school and the degree of criticism also appears. We have discussed possible reasons for this in the section on students, and the same possibilities apply here. It certainly appears that parents who are somewhat more knowledgeable about education are more likely to be critical of local schools than parents whose knowledge is slim. It also appears that many Indian parents may prefer that their children attend predominantly or entirely Indian schools, at least where these schools are comparable in quality to non-Indian schools.

It is interesting that, in 7 out of 9 cases, the most critical students had the most critical parents. On the other hand, our listing of the 9 schools which were most favored by students and parents contains only 3 schools which appear in both lists. Possibly students and parents in these latter communities do not share the same views. A more likely explanation, we think, is that our rating scales distinguished more accurately between critical and relatively uncritical assessments of the schools by both students and parents than it did between neutral or slightly positive (e.g., "It's OK") and extremely positive statements about the schools.

It may also be the case that, in communities where no issue had assumed importance, most people simply accepted the school without much question. On the other hand, it appears that an issue had assumed real importance and led to the polarization of Indian opinion in several communities. It may be that people are more likely to become concerned about something which appears very wrong with the school than they are to become concerned about some very positive aspect. A community of Indian students and parents would therefore more likely be in accord in sharing a negative opinion of the school than they would be in sharing a positive opinion of it.

It appears that the negative opinions of most Indians centered around such issues as: whom the school "belongs to"--Indians or non-Indians; perceived quality of the teachers and administrators; the general socioeconomic situation of local Indians compared with local non-Indians; discrimination against Indians by teachers, administrators, or other students in the school. Unfortunately, we cannot provide a more detailed description of these issues due to the nature of the rating scale analysis and the lack of detailed reports on these matters from most of our field centers.

### Community Leaders

Over 150 Indian and non-Indian community leaders were interviewed by field workers during the course of the study. Indian community leaders included tribal councilmen, education committeemen, school board members, and other people who were influential or important due to their position in the community. Non-Indians interviewed in this category included school board members, politicians and office-holders at the local, county, and state level, BIA Agency and Area personnel, and other influential individuals in the local area. Such persons generally seemed more knowledgeable concerning the schools than most parents in the communities we studied.

The most important result of the analyses of these interviews is that these influential people were, on the whole, more critical of the schools serving Indians than were Indian students and parents.

#### Scale B: Respondent's Over-all Evaluation of the School Program for Individual Students.

This scale is roughly comparable to parent Scale II-B and student Scale K. Forty percent of the 153 community leaders rated on this scale were rated at points 1, 2, or 3--all of which indicate a fairly negative opinion of the schools. Of these 40 percent, 15 percent were rated at points 1 and 2, indicating that these individuals were very critical of the schools. Thirty-seven percent were rated at point 4--a "slightly positive" evaluation, and 23 percent at points 5 or 6. The mean score for the total sample was 3.69. In contrast to this, only 22 percent of our student sample and 18 percent of our parent sample were rated as generally critical of the schools (points 1, 2, and 3).

#### Scale D: Respondent's Perception of the Effectiveness of School in Assisting toward Efficient Participation in Modern Society.

Community leaders appeared even more critical of the schools on this scale than on Scale B. The mean score for the total sample was 3.22. Fifty-three percent of the 145 individuals rated were placed at points 1, 2, or 3 on this scale. Specifically, 24 percent were rated at point 3, 26 percent at point 2, and 3 percent at point 1. Thirty-five percent of the respondents were rated at point 4, and 12 percent at point 5. The definitions of points 2 and 4 on this scale are:

2. Respondent sees the school as ineffective, but not as bad as it could be. This ineffectiveness of the school may be due to attitudes of teachers, or to lacks in the curriculum, or to inadequacies of students and their families.
4. Respondent sees the school as helping most students in the direction of efficient participation in modern society. But the school does not succeed with some students.

It is clear that a majority of these influential people do not believe that many Indian youth are "succeeding" in contemporary American society, at least according to the terms by which success is generally measured in this society. This observation on the part of these people does not seem surprising, nor does their evident feeling that the schools could do better in helping Indian students to achieve such success than they are now doing.\* However, their criticism of the schools is clearer than criticisms made by students and parents to us.

In order to better understand these results, we calculated the mean scores on these two scales separately for Indian and non-Indian community leaders.\*\* The results are presented in the table below:

Table 3  
Mean Scores for Indian and Non-Indian Community Leaders  
on Scales B and D

| <u>Scale</u> | <u>Indian Community<br/>Leaders</u><br>(N = 74) | <u>Non-Indian<br/>Community Leaders</u><br>(N = 46) | <u>Total<br/>Sample</u><br>(N = 158) |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| B            | 3.61                                            | 3.98                                                | 3.69                                 |
| D            | 3.10                                            | 3.59                                                | 3.22                                 |

The differences between the distributions of ratings for Indian and non-Indian community leaders were tested with the chi-square test of significance and found to be significant at the .01 level for Scale B and the .05 level for Scale D. Clearly, our sample of Indian community leaders was more critical of the schools serving Indian youth than our sample of non-Indian community leaders.

\*Most community leaders felt that school should both prepare students to succeed in the dominant society and to appreciate and understand their own culture. See Paper No. 10 in this series for a more detailed account of this.

\*\*These calculations do not include results for community leaders in Chicago, Minnesota, or Wisconsin schools.

### Summary and Conclusions

Most Indians, like most other Americans, accept the schools that serve them as being adequate or good. Most also have some complaints, but it appears that, at most, only one in five students and parents have very serious ones. In most schools, it appears that Indian students have little sophistication regarding education; few know much about other schools or other alternatives to the kind of curriculum, teachers and school program which they have at the school they attend. Indian students in more isolated areas in particular have little basis for comparing their school with other schools.

As for parents, many seem to know little about even the schools their own children attend.\* This is understandable in the light of the cultural, social, and economic conditions of life in the Indian community and the differences between these conditions and the conditions of life for administrators and teachers in the school. It does mean, however, that most Indian parents have a poor basis for critically evaluating their schools, particularly if compared with college-educated middle and upper-class Americans.

The strongest criticisms of schools for Indians today are voiced by community leaders and other influential people. Such individuals are generally better-educated and better-informed than the typical Indian parent; consequently, most have a better basis for understanding the needs of Indian students and for judging the quality of education offered to them. People of some importance may also feel safer or be more accustomed to making independent, negative judgments about local schools to strangers, of course. It does appear that Indians in positions of importance and influence are more critical of the education of Indian youth than are non-Indians in similar positions.

There are several points which need to be made about the relative lack of serious criticism in many Indian communities. First, it is possible that the "amount" and "depth" of criticism have been underestimated. Neither the short period of field work in each community (one to two months, generally) nor the interviews and rating scales were really adequate to discover and report all the special problems and issues in each community. Instead, a general indication of overall approval or disapproval of the school, the teachers, the administration, and the curriculum was arrived at. We also know, of course, that people are frequently apt to conceal their negative feelings about something when talking with a stranger. We tried to overcome this by using Indian interviewers, stressing that the respondents would remain anonymous, and making it clear that we were interested in any criticisms they had of the schools. Nonetheless, some respondents probably remained reluctant to express negative opinions, and others may have simply found that replying, "It's OK" was easier and quicker than explaining in detail about what they felt was wrong with the school. Interviewers were less

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\*The reader is referred to Paper No. 12 in this series, "Attitudes, Understanding, and Interaction: Students, Parents, Teachers, and Community Leaders," for a more detailed consideration of how familiar Indian parents are with their schools.

apt to press a respondent for details if he said, "It's OK" than they were if he said, "It's not very good."

A second observation is that, though most students and parents approved of their schools, there were a number of exceptions. In several communities, it was clear that a majority of Indians were quite critical of their school. This seemed to be the case most often in relatively acculturated Indian communities and where Indians were in the minority in the school population. Clearly, however, Indian opinion can be polarized and mobilized in any community. An interesting example of what can happen in a relatively unacculturated community is the case of the White Mountain Apaches in Cibecue, Arizona. Based on interviews with students and parents in Cibecue conducted in the winter of 1969, it appeared that these people had no serious criticisms of their school. However, in June, 1970, a group known as the Cibecue Community Club submitted a "Manifesto for Community Action" to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in which they attacked the "paternalistic control" of the Apache community by the "white bureaucracy," especially the BIA. They stated: "Because of the attitudes of the non-Apaches who have thus assumed control of our community affairs, it is impossible for most Apache parents to look upon the school as their own or as an extension of themselves. . . ." These Apaches go on to demand control of the school and, specifically, the power to hire and fire administrators and teachers. Although we do not know to what extent this group is representative of the entire White Mountain Apache community, it is clear that a significant group has taken a critical stand. We expect that the pressure for change in Indian education will come more and more from similar groups, and that such groups will slowly affect and mobilize the opinions of many other Indians in their communities.

Though the general acceptance by Indians of their schools is evident, the significance of: (1) special criticisms--particularly the lack of attention to Indian history and culture, (2) the several communities in which Indians are very critical of their schools or of certain aspects of these schools, and (3) militant community groups who advocate changes in personnel, programs, and especially control of the school, and (4) the stronger criticisms of most (especially Indian) community leaders and influential people, should not be underestimated.